



FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

*"To grow in faith, love and fellowship
as we serve God and all of our community."*

We are a bunch of seekers on a journey. We learn together and we serve together. We believe that God is love and that all persons are created in God's own image. We are people from all walks of life with varied life experiences doing our best to live out God's love in the world. So truly **"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey you are welcome here."**



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The Pastor's Pen | A New Year

Grace and peace to you!

Happy New Year! After the celebrations are over and the confetti is put away, the new year arrives with a kind of quiet promise. We mark it with calendars and resolutions, with hopes that somehow this year will be different. But the truth is that most new beginnings don't arrive with fireworks or fanfare. They come quietly.

A new year often begins much like dawn—slowly, almost unnoticed. The light doesn't rush in all at once. It creeps in gently, revealing what was already there, inviting us to see it differently. Nothing has changed in an instant, and yet everything is made new by the light. New beginnings are less about erasing the past and more about God meeting us right where we are and saying, "Let's begin again."

There are many opportunities...and questions...that we have as we look at the year 2026. But we also have so many of the things that make this church special: the care and love of the people here and the desire to protect the soul of the church. There is a rich heritage and hope for the future. Remember that as this new year unfolds, we don't step forward alone. We carry our joys and our wounds, our hopes and our fears—and we trust that God goes before us, walking with us into whatever lies ahead.

The good news of the New Year is not that we must become someone new overnight, but that God's mercies are new every morning—and that is more than enough. I'm glad that I am walking with you on this journey!

Blessings, Pastor Anne

Title: A Time for Everything
Artist: Edie Mae Herrel
Date: 1975
Location: Columbus, OH
Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Source: Vanderbilt Divinity Library



A Prayer for the New Year

God of new beginnings,
You wipe away our tears and call us to care for one another.
Give us eyes to see your gifts, hearts to embrace all creation,
and hands to serve you every day of our lives.
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Weekly Scripture References | January Lectionary

January 1 | Holy Name of Jesus

Numbers 6:22-27
Psalm 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:15-21

January 4 | 2nd Sunday after Christmas Day

Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:(1-9), 10-18

January 6 | Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72: 1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

January 11 | Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 29
Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17

January 18 | 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany

Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 40:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42

January 25 | 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany

Isaiah 9:1-4
Psalm 27:1, 4-9
1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Matthew 4:12-23

Calendar of Events

1	New Year's Day	
	Kwanzaa ends	
4	Second Sunday after Christmas	
	11:00 AM	Worship W. Horah St.
5	5:30 PM	Circle 7 Meeting Dawn Isenberg's Home
6	Epiphany	
	6:30 PM	Circle 6 Meeting Fellowship Hall
7	7:00 PM	Choir Rehearsal
8	11:30 AM	Primetimers Fellowship Hall
	1:15 PM	Mission Committee Meeting Fellowship Hall
	6:00 PM	Finance Committee
11	Baptism of Christ	
	11:00 AM	Worship W. Horah St.
	12:00 PM	Take down Christmas decorations
	4:00 PM	Property Committee
13	10:30 AM	Meals on Wheels Deliveries
14	5:30 PM	WOW Bible Study Fellowship Hall
	7:00 PM	Choir Rehearsal



18	Second Sunday after the Epiphany	
	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	
	11:00 AM	Worship W. Horah St.
19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	
20	1:00 PM	Bless These Stitches
21	5:30 PM	WOW Bible Study Fellowship Hall
	7:00 PM	Choir Rehearsal
25	Third Sunday after the Epiphany	
	11:00 AM	Worship W. Horah St.
27	10:30 AM	Meals on Wheels Deliveries
28	5:30 PM	WOW Bible Study Fellowship Hall
	7:00 PM	Choir Rehearsal

WOW Wednesday Bible Study

WOW Wednesday will resume meeting on January 14, 2026 from 5:30 - 7:00 pm with shared food in the Fellowship Hall and a Study on Romans. Please read two chapters for each session in preparation for upcoming discussion.

Bless These Stitches

Members of Bless These Stitches work together and at home! There are many knitted and crocheted items on the shelf outside of the office ready to go to their new homes. If you know someone who would benefit from this mission, who would appreciate knowing that someone is thinking of them and praying for them, please take a comfort item and deliver it to them as an extension of our ministry. If you are planning to give an item as a personal gift or for personal use, a donation is appreciated. Donations are used to purchase materials to further the ministry of Bless These Stitches and additional funds go towards Capital Improvement Projects.

We now include adding hats and scarves to our blessing pantry during the cold winter months. If you knit or crochet, want to learn, or want to share in fellowship with other needleworkers, join us on the third Tuesday of the month at 1:00 pm!

\$3.00.....Dishcloths	\$10.00.....Scarves
\$5.00.....Small Hats	\$10.00.....Large Hats
\$10.00.....Small Shawls	\$20.00.....Large Shawls

Primetimers

The Primetimers met on Thursday, December 11 for a Christmas Dinner and Program of Carols and Games. Action was taken to give \$100 to the Christmas Happiness Fund, sponsored by The Salisbury Post, and \$100 to the Blessing Pantry Fund.

The Primetimers will meet on Thursday, January 8, 2026 from 11:30 – 1:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall for a catered meal with desserts, \$12 per person. Please contact Rev. Larry Bolick 828.612.8146 by Monday, January 5, 2026 with your reservation for the meal. The program will be provided by Mr. Coleman Emerson, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Rowan County.

Winter Wear for Winter Weather

The Mission Committee is sponsoring scarves, hats, gloves, and socks for the Rowan Helping Ministries shelter guests from Christmas Eve through January 11th, 2026 when they will be dedicated. These items can be placed in the manger in the Sanctuary.

Title: Shepherds
Artist: John August Swanson
Inspired by Luke 2:1-20
Source: Vanderbilt Divinity Library

Location: Los Angeles, CA
Date: 1985





Take a Blessing, Leave a Blessing, Be a Blessing

The Blessing Pantry located near the driveway into the parking lot on Church Street is an outreach to the neighboring community. Members of the Mission Committee continue to monitor the box and add items at least once a week, but demand is great and it is usually emptied in a couple of days.

How can you participate?

Bring your contributions to the Church office during office hours. You can also add items directly to the Blessing Box or make a monetary contribution to help the Mission Committee to keep the pantry supplied.

Thank you for supporting this important effort to be an active presence in our neighborhood every day of the week!

Little Red Wagon

The items donated to the Little Red Wagon are given to Rowan Helping Ministries Food for Thought Backpack Program. Items may be placed in the Little Red Wagon or dropped off at the First UCC Church office during weekly office hours.

Suggested Items for the Blessing Pantry	Suggested Items for the Little Red Wagon
Canned meats (chicken, tuna, ham, Spam) Hearty soups with pull tab Chef Boyardee canned meals Canned fruits and vegetables Peanut butter and jelly, bread Dried goods (noodles, cereals, beans) Personal hygiene products Baby care items (wipes, snack pouches) Can openers Spices Exclude items that may perish in weather conditions.	Mac & Cheese cups Canned ravioli Individual cereal packs Oatmeal/grits Pop Tarts Pudding cups Fruit cups Granola bars Lance crackers (variety packs) Microwave meals (shelf stable soups, pasta, etc.)

Requests for Thoughts & Prayers

God has blessed creation with a great variety of gifts and gathered all people into one family, so that in sharing, we might strengthen and be strengthened by one another. We gather in our hearts and minds

Desiree Artz, Tyler Bernhardt, Rev. David Crook, Gerri Crummett (Donna Odrosky's sister), Maggie Derby (great granddaughter of Jim Weaver), Emily Faust, Emily Hauze (Linda Hauze's daughter-in-law), Cathy Hedrick (John Marion's sister), Jim Lyerly, John Marion, Shirley McNeil, Eddie Meeker, Dan Morgan, Paul Paxton, Glenda Shrewsbury, Bobbie Troutman, Tom Troutman, John and Sandy Wagoner, Barbara Waller, Waylon Ward, Sandra Wrights (Nate Wrights' mother), Janette Yost.

Grant these prayers, O God, gathering into your arms all the peoples of the world, so that in your embrace we may find blessing, healing, peace, and the fullness of our inheritance. Amen.

Mission Committee

- The Mission Committee sponsored 30 One Church One Child Star Gifts in December, provided 8 Catawba Students with Study Packs during exam week, and sponsored The Annual UCC Christmas Fund, Veterans of the Cross Offering during Christmas Services. On December 23, a Rowan Helping Ministry Shelter Meal in Jennie's Kitchen was prepared and served to shelter guests, staff and volunteers, totaling 118 meals. Many thanks to all who volunteered their time, talent, and desserts for this very worthwhile project. The expense for the food was taken from First Foundation Grant Funds.
- During the end of December and in January, the Committee is collecting hats, scarves, gloves, and socks for RHM Shelter Guests to be dedicated on Sunday, January 11, 2026.
- The Blessing Pantry has been stocked and re-stocked several times each week in December by members of our congregation. Thanks to Linda Hauze who has been purchasing items to be placed in the Blessing Pantry in December.
- The Committee will meet on Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 1:15 pm (after Primetimers) to plan for the first several months of 2026.

Property Committee

The following is a list of major maintenance projects and some estimates. Priority level is determined with safety, accessibility, and asset preservation in mind. Contributing factors include time and funding needed to complete the project, as well as required expertise, and the degree to which the project benefits our current members and influences our community impact.

<u>PRIORITY</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>LOW</u>	<u>HIGH</u>	<u>JUSTIFICATION</u>
HIGH	Replace sanctuary HVAC	\$52,640	\$204,400	Functionality/Community Impact
HIGH	Northwest corner gutter clogged			Preservation/Aesthetic
HIGH	Bathroom at sanctuary level	\$3,000	\$16,000	Accessibility, Compliance
HIGH	Replace parking lot lights with LED	\$3,000	\$10,000	Safety
HIGH	Replace cooling tower	\$52,640	\$204,400	Functionality/Community Impact
HIGH	Partition pews for wheelchair accessibility			Accessibility
HIGH	Replace disintegrated wrought iron railings on front steps			Safety, Accessibility
HIGH	Replace outlets in Nursery			Safety, Compliance
HIGH	Replace outlets in Sanctuary			Safety, Compliance
HIGH	Peeling paint on Narthex doors to Sanctuary			Preservation/Aesthetic
HIGH	Wet ceiling/peeling paint in Sanctuary ceiling			Preservation/Aesthetic
HIGH	Install hand railing in stairwell outside flower room			Safety, Accessibility
HIGH	Peep holes in front door not adequate			Safety
HIGH	Wet wall/peeling paint in west stairwell			Preservation/Aesthetic
HIGH	Wet wall/peeling paint in choir room			Preservation/Aesthetic
HIGH	Wet walls/peeling paint in balcony stairwell (Add gutter to northeast corner of sanctuary)	\$25,000	\$50,000	Preservation/Aesthetic
HIGH	Wet wall/peeling paint in 3rd floor Junior dept.			Preservation/Aesthetic

<u>PRIORITY</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>LOW</u>	<u>HIGH</u>	<u>JUSTIFICATION</u>
MEDIUM	Replace sanctuary carpet	\$14,000	\$25,000	Preservation/Aesthetic, Community Impact
MEDIUM	Replace 2nd floor carpets			Preservation/Aesthetic, Community Impact
MEDIUM	Replace 1st floor carpets			Preservation/Aesthetic, Community Impact
MEDIUM	Replace East & West stairwell carpets			Preservation/Aesthetic, Community Impact
MEDIUM	Repair peeling paint in fellowship hall near kitchen service window			Preservation/Aesthetic, Community Impact
MEDIUM	R&R hose bib at back door			Preservation/Aesthetic
MEDIUM	Seal cracks in asphalt pavement	\$4,800	\$18,000	Safety, Preservation/Aesthetic
MEDIUM	Replace front marquis	\$2,000	\$10,000	Preservation/Aesthetic, Community Impact
MEDIUM	Replace all storm windows with double glazed	\$18,000	\$72,000	Preservation/Aesthetic, Functionality
MEDIUM	Replace broken handicap/visitor signs in West parking lot	\$300	\$600	Preservation/Aesthetic, Accessibility
MEDIUM	Replace robot vacuums and mop (or re-engage cleaning service)	\$2,000	\$5,000	Functionality/Community Impact
MEDIUM	Replace all fluorescent lights with motion activated LED	\$5,225	\$19,250	Safety, Functionality/Community Impact
MEDIUM	Directional signs inside hallways			Accessibility
MEDIUM	Directional signs outside church	\$300	\$600	Accessibility
MEDIUM	Post evac route signs in all rooms, hallways, and stairwells			Safety
LOW	Install electrical outlet in communion room			Functionality/Community Impact
LOW	Replace Fellowship Hall floor	\$12,600	\$30,188	Functionality/Community Impact, Preservation/Aesthetic
LOW	Elevator (priority based on current funding)	\$48,000	\$100,000	Accessibility
LOW	Investigate solar renewables			Functionality/Community Impact
LOW	Install switch in kitchen for dishwasher			Functionality/Community Impact
LOW	Need window in Pastor's office door			Safety
LOW	Need window in Nursery door			Safety
LOW	Purchase A/V cart for big screen TV			Functionality/Community Impact
LOW	Replace ice maker	\$800	\$1,500	Functionality/Community Impact
LOW	New landscaping - sanctuary, kidney bean, front stairs			Preservation/Aesthetic
LOW	Redo Motley Crew Sunday School room after pipe break	\$3,600	\$6,000	Preservation/Aesthetic, Functionality
LOW	Replace 3rd floor carpets			Preservation/Aesthetic, Functionality
LOW	Convection oven not working	\$200	\$4,500	Safety, Functionality/Community Impact
LOW	Refinish stage floor			Functionality/Community Impact
LOW	Cement bases for outdoor benches			Functionality/Community Impact
LOW	Make outdoor decorative water fountain operational			Preservation/Aesthetic
		Low Est.	High Est.	
		\$248,805	\$779,938	

Transition Team

Catawba College has temporarily closed Omwake-Dearborn Chapel after an engineering assessment identified structural issues. Out of an abundance of caution, all public access to the sanctuary is prohibited until necessary remediation is complete. Catawba College remains committed to the safety of our community and the preservation of this historic campus space.

However, we would like to continue re-envisioning the future of First UCC. This change could help us continue to grow and serve in meaningful ways as we navigate the challenges of an aging building.

Summary of the Pilot Program Question & Answer Meeting on Dec. 14, 2025

Questions

Will we have an office at Catawba?

We would need to discuss office space needs and options.

Option: Rent office space on Catawba's Campus

Option: Contract office space on Horah St. with Lease/Buyer

If we have this space (Horah St.) why move to Catawba yet?

Chapel renovations

Robertson College Community Center renovations

What are we gaining by going to a temporary space at Catawba?

A program in partnership with Catawba means maintaining a relationship with Catawba: potential to interact with students and other opportunities that we otherwise would not have.

What options do we have besides Catawba?

Are we going to be a department there (Catawba)?

What happens in ten years if we don't grow?

Can we extend the period before we make a formal decision?

What steps can we take now to map out a 5 and 10 year strategic plan?

Is the list of needed maintenance available to the Congregation?

Yes, it will be included in Thursday Thoughts and available in paper copy in the Narthex.

This list is a starting point and does not encompass all needs.

The costs are estimated.

The current list is not in a specific order of urgency.

We have something to offer. How can we tell our story and get the word out?

May we move the Jan. 4th vote to Jan. 11?

If we vote "yes" to continuing our partnership with Catawba, what happens to our building?

We could lease the building.

We could list the building/property for sale.

If we sell the building/property, can we still come back here (Horah St.)?

If we sell, we could put provisions in to use the building.

Additional option: We could vote to use the money we have in the bank for maintenance. Currently, we have no debt.

If we vote "yes," we will be in a space at Catawba, one recommended by the Catawba team?

If this is a personal commitment with the Nelson's, what happens when they retire or transition away from Catawba?

The Memorandum of Understanding or other binding legal documents should account for a transition in institutional leadership.

What about our foundation?

Our foundation is a separate legal entity. It is not tied to the physical church plant.

Following Pastor Carol's transition, did we intentionally return to older E and R ways?

What is our identity?

How do we want to be seen?

This may be because the tradition and consistency has helped us maintain continuity with guest ministers and an interim minister.

Commentary

Change our language to "with Catawba" instead of "at Catawba"

In the context of personal investment- Larry Bolick and Ken Clapp have visited individually with members who are no longer able to physically attend church in our space, and they are okay with moving forward with other options because they understand changes will need to be made.

There is not appropriate space for our programming in the Chapel.

Accessible bathrooms on the main floor will be addressed with the renovations.

Location of potential office space- what are our options?

Ability/space to store our materials, program supplies, decorative items, etc.

Accessible space large enough for fellowship and meals

Next Steps:

Share the list of maintenance needs (urgent vs. important)

Transition Team will meet with Karen Ewen regarding alternate Worship spaces

Share the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from Catawba, when it comes available.



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Reflection on John 1:(1-9), 10-18 | Kathryn Matthews Huey

“...However, this season of Christmas does more than remind us of what God has already done; rather, it proclaims that God is active in the world today, in this setting of history. We might feel tired and relieved that Christmas is over, but it would be better to feel energized and renewed by the good news of the gift of Jesus Christ every day, not just on one morning each year. What is the new thing that God is doing in the life of your congregation, in your own life, in the life of the United Church of Christ? Barbara Brown Taylor suggests that we each can use our gifts to bring a word to life, to embody a word, whether that word is compassion, justice, generosity, patience, or love, so that it’s no longer an “abstract concept” but truly a word made flesh, brought to reality and breathed with life. She makes the same observation about congregations (*Feasting on the Word Year C, Vol. 1*). What word or words does your congregation bring to life?

In this new day, in this brand new year, God is revealing God’s own self in the life of your community. Hearing such good news, how is your church, then, “anointed with the oil of gladness”? How will we continue to sing the joy of Christmas, to proclaim in the days ahead the good news of “grace upon grace,” of our coming home and of God making a home in our midst? Is this the way we frame, the way we speak, of the mission of our church? Perhaps Christmas morning is unlike all other mornings, but indeed it is like every other morning of our lives, too, because Jesus Christ is alive and God is at work in our lives, here and now. Richard Ascough recalls an image from Henri Nouwen’s diary from Genesee Abbey, when he describes the Nativity set under the altar there, with small, humble figures that a light projects larger than life onto the wall nearby, and all the difference the light makes in this scene (*New Proclamation Year C 2000-2001*). What difference has the light shining on your life made in the life of the world?”

<https://www.ucc.org/sermon-seeds/sermon-seeds-epiphany/>